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The King's Daughter.

49.1691.







The King's Daughter.

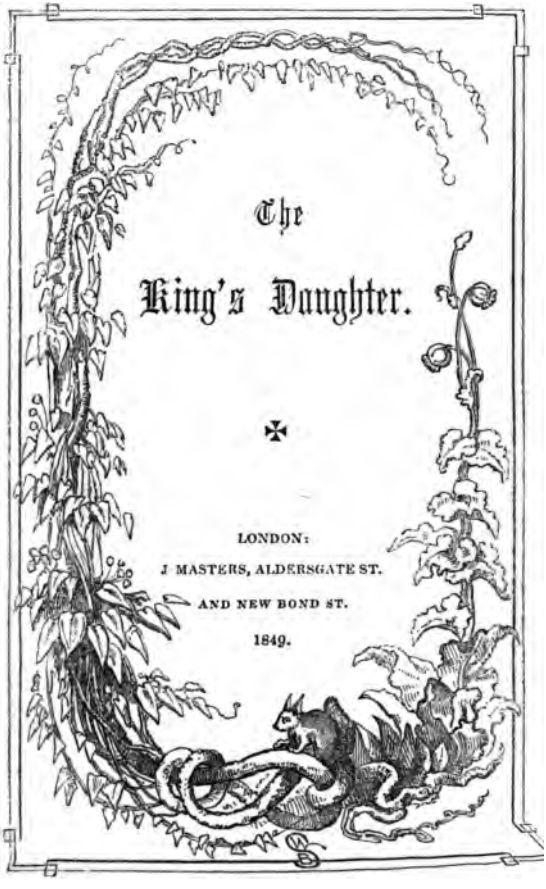


It may be some recommendation to the following little tale, that it is published with the intent of benefiting the "Orphan's Home," at Devonport; by one who though not personally acquainted with the zealous little community, has heard enough of their noble deeds to arouse the deepest feelings of respect and admiration, and make her anxious to devote whatever powers she may possess to further its endeavours.

All Saints' Day, 1849.



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The
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The King's Daughter.

CHAPTER I.

I WAS wandering one bright and glorious summer day, among meadows and fields, beside a winding river, and I gazed on the beauty all around me. The clear blue sky, the lovely flowers, the shining pebbles, as they lay in the limpid stream, the bright waters sparkling in the sunbeam; all seemed touched with the wing of the spirit of beauty; and I felt that though our dull mortal ears could not catch the sound, the trees of the forest were "singing together," and every

part of creation was "shouting for joy." But one cloud was in sight, and that was—the smoke of the little village, or country town, of Westmaven, which went wreathing to the sky, and while it gave life to the scene, yet mingled with it a sort of earthly taint. It was like a note from a human voice in a chorus of angels.

The scene was a happy, peaceful one, yet it brought no peace to me. No; there was nothing within me that could respond to the calm beauty. A youth of worldliness and ungodliness had brought me to an unhallowed middle age. Wearied with the turmoil of cities, I had sought to forget their business and hollow pleasures in dwelling for a space in a quiet rural spot, in one of the south-western counties of our favoured Isle. But grace and purity found, alas, no echo in my heart. The fount of holy enjoyment had been dried up by the fierce false glare of dissipation; and the calm beauty of nature sat like a dead weight upon my spirit. I sighed for a return of the fresh, pure, spirit of boyhood. Oh, was the buoyancy of heart that once made me exult in the glories of creation

gone for ever? I lay me down beneath a spreading tree, and would fain have wept to relieve the choking at my heart. I mused for some time, how long, I cannot say. Retrospection is an engrossing, though often heart-wringing employment; and as I retraced in bitterness of heart, step by step, the course of life which had plunged me at last into moroseness and misanthropy, I knew not how time fled.

I saw the sun sink slowly behind the hill, shedding a mellow light over the landscape: I watched the last beam disappear, when methought I heard the voices of children at play. It was an agreeable dispelling of my gloomy visions, for I have a natural fondness for children; I drew near the spot whence the voices seemed to proceed, and my curiosity was gratified, for by a murmuring stream, in an open space in the wood, I beheld a group of children in full conversation, and laughing merrily. I stood in a position to observe them without their perceiving me.

The party consisted of eight or nine children: two boys were sailing a small boat on the stream; and now and then, when the

little bark was in peril, they would dash ankle-deep into the water, to the horror of two or three little girls who were seated on the bank, weaving flowers. One boy was busy peeling a willow wand, and another was intent on a book, as he lay stretched full length on the grass. It was a group to please both the painter and poet. One little girl in particular attracted my notice. She was seated in the centre of the group, her lap full of the flowers which she and her companions were weaving into crowns and wreaths.

One glance at her showed me that she was no ordinary child. Her countenance was sweet and placid, her voice low and soft, and there was a peaceful dignity in her smile that might have sat on the features of an angel.

One little child sat close by her, her head often leaning on her shoulder, looking up to her with loving admiration. All at once she sprung from her seat on the turf and taking a wreath from one of the others, she said as she put it on the head of her friend, "Look, Marion! look, Cicely! it will do quite well; it is perfect." And indeed it was perfect; I *gazed* in admiration on the soft beauty of the

child, heightened by the wild simple garland of honeysuckle, harebells, and wild roses. "There!" continued little Rose, taking off the crown, "we will keep it fresh for to-night and then we will crown you in public."

The conversation of the little party then became desultory, and to me incoherent, as I could not always catch what they were saying; but I gathered from what reached my ears, that the child I so much admired was called Amy, and that Rose, and the boy who lay reading on the turf, were her cousins, with whom she seemed to live. I surmised, and it proved with truth, that she was an orphan. It seemed to be her birthday, and she was to be crowned that evening with the crown they had just woven.

Little Rosie was very eloquent about the prospective delights of the evening, "You will be a Queen, Amy, when you are crowned. How nice to be a real Queen! Should you not like it?"

"Not a Queen, Rosie," said Cicely, "Amy is too young, she can only be a princess."

"Oh yes, a princess," said Rose, "that sounds prettier too, I should like to be a

princess. Princesses are King's daughters, are they not? Oh should you not like to be a king's daughter, Amy?"

"I am a King's daughter," said Amy in a low murmuring voice.

"A king's daughter!" shouted one of the boys, "Amy a king's daughter! Well that is good."

Amy coloured crimson, for she thought no one had heard her but Rosie.

"Ha! ha!" laughed another boy, "pray, what is your father king of?"

"King of Dreamland, I suppose," said Marion, in a sneering tone.

All this time Amy kept her soft blue eyes fixed on the flowers, and though her colour came and went, it was not from anger. It pained one so gentle to have her inmost thoughts canvassed and laughed at by rude boys and thoughtless girls. The boy who was lying on the grass now got up, and standing before Amy, said gravely, "Tell *me*, Amy, what you mean." Amy's liquid eyes were raised timidly to her cousin's face, then seeing he was on kindness bent, she smiled and pointing to the clear blue sky, whispered,

"My Father dwells in palaces not made with hands."

The boy looked up at the sky, gazed for a moment reverentially on the tiny form before him, and then returned to his seat on the turf. But I saw he no longer read. His eyes wandered from his book to the heavens, and then rested on his cousin's countenance.

"Well, Ernest, my fine fellow," said one of the boys again, "what has she told you? You who are always reading, can perhaps understand her better than we commoner spirits who care for nothing but fun."

"How fares it with his Majesty of Gooseland?" said another.

"I'll tell you what," said Ernest hastily raising himself on one arm, "you shall none of you torment that child, or it will be worse for you; she is far too good and gentle for us, and if one of you taunt her again it will be at your peril."

"Dear Ernest, do not be angry," said Amy quietly, "do not mind their laughing at *me*, only they ought not to joke on such a subject."

"Well, I declare, it is a shame to tease

her," said a boy who had been laughing with the others, but who had said nothing. "Let her alone, Frank, she is a good little thing."

Amy's quiet dignity of manner seemed to awe her companions; for the time they ceased to torment her, and the whole party soon began their homeward way. I followed at some distance, still unperceived or at least unnoticed. My thoughts were full of this angelic little one, and I wished to find out her abode. The thoughtful Ernest too had excited my interest. As he and Amy walked side by side, I saw a strong likeness between them; but hers was the chastened beauty of a pure spirit, while his was that of a son of earth, with the pride of life and intellect stamped on every feature.

As we reached Westmaven, one by one of the little party branched off to their respective homes; Amy, Ernest, and Rosie, turned into a private pleasure ground running for some distance parallel with a public footpath. Along this footpath I bent my steps, and by this means overheard every word the children spoke. "Sit here, Amy," said Ernest,

"we need not go home just yet;" and the children sat down on a garden bench.

"I want to ask you," said Ernest after a pause, "do you really *feel* that you are a King's daughter, Amy? I know we are all children of the Great GOD, but I never saw any one but you remember it always."

"Oh, I do not always indeed," said Amy, "but I do love to think of my FATHER, Who is Almighty, and to feel His eye ever upon me. For, Ernest, I have no earthly father."

"And is it then this that makes you so gentle and forgiving? You are so very different from the others! You are never rude like Marion, or passionate like Cicely, or"

"Oh, hush, Ernest; indeed I am not good. They are all the King's daughters too; He loves them all. We are all His from our baptism, one great family."

"Oh, Amy," cried Rosie, "we cannot love every one. How can we love wicked people, who are Christians, *called* Christians, I mean?"

"Who are we, Rosie, to say one is wicked and another good?"

"No, but we cannot help seeing people are bad sometimes."

"Think, Rosie, if little Ralph were naughty, you would be very sorry; but should you not love him still?"

"Yes, indeed," said Rosie.

"Well; we should feel the same about all the sons and daughters of the great King our FATHER."

"I really believe you do feel it, Amy," said Rosie, who being satisfied now ran off by herself.

I fancied Ernest was glad his little sister had asked questions he felt half ashamed to ask himself; for he listened very attentively, and when Rose was gone, he said, "Oh, Amy, I wish I could feel like you! I always learn so much from you."

"From me! oh no! you who are so clever, can learn nothing from me; I can teach you nothing!"

"Cleverness is not goodness, Amy, nor yet a part of it. It is often a great temptation and leads us away from the right path."

"Yet it is a gift from the great King," *murmured* Amy.

Ernest smiled sadly; "And you mean that He does not give His sons weapons to fight against Himself. Well, you are right: yet there are traitors in every kingdom, and oh, Amy, how fearful will be their lot!"

They were the last words I heard, for the children went homewards; I watched them till they were out of sight, and then went to my home with better and purer thoughts than had been in my bosom for many a year.

CHAPTER II.

IN my daily walks I often wandered towards the garden paling, hoping again to see the little Amy, but in vain. Day after day passed, and beyond hearing her voice in the distance once or twice, she had, as it were, ceased to exist for me.

I did not know to whom the place belonged, so that great as was the temptation to trespass, I dare not venture to intrude on private property. But at last my hopes were fulfilled. I was walking one day on a high bank by the side of a muddy lane, when I perceived two children at some little distance; I stopped, and as the children approached, I recognized Amy and Rose. Amy had a basket on her arm which seemed to contain gifts

for poor people. I cannot say whether it was my fancy, but it struck me that her cheek was paler and her step more faltering than before.

The two children advanced slowly, picking their way through the dirt; just as they got opposite where I stood on the bank they stopped for a moment to rest. A loud "halloo!" from the other side of the hedge made both them and me start, and in an instant two boys, whom I recognized as the owners of the little boat in the wood, bounded across the lane and stood, unwelcomed, before the two little girls.

"How now!" said one rudely pulling aside the cover of the basket, "what have we got here? Physic? No, it's wine, I declare. Ha! ha! King's Daughters cannot take a walk without wine to drink by the way."

"Oh, Lyulph, don't tease us," said Rosie in an imploring tone, "We have been to take some wine to a poor sick girl, and . . ."

"Oh, nonsense! Here, Frank, let's drink it then," said Lyulph.

"Oh no, please don't," said Amy, "my uncle will be so displeased."

"So you would tell him, would you? You cowardly little thing!"

"He is sure to ask me what has become of it all, and I must tell the truth. Besides, you would not mind his knowing if it was not wrong. Frank! Lyulph! pray let me go on!" and Amy spoke and looked so beseechingly that Frank said, "Come on, Lyulph, let her alone!" and he went on; Lyulph followed, but not without first giving Rosie a push and knocking up the basket on Amy's arm. Rosie fell into the mud, and the contents of the basket lay scattered on the ground. Rosie in a passion called after her tormentor as he ran off. "We will tell Ernest, and he will avenge us. If he had been here you would never have dared to do it. You rude, naughty, disagreeable boy!"

"Hush, Rosie," said Amy, "let us pick up these things, he will not do it again."

"Oh, but he will, Amy! he is much worse than Frank, and I heard papa say the other day, that he was the most wilful boy he ever saw, and that . . . but oh, dear Amy, what a mess all our nice things are in! What shall we do? Oh, these tiresome boys!"

and poor little Rose surveyed the soiled and broken contents of the basket with a rueful countenance.

Amy tried to pacify her: "Never mind, Rosie; we must not be too angry with him: all boys are tiresome."

"No, not all; Ernest never is!" persisted Rose.

"Ernest! No, but Ralph is; besides we should remember that 'a soft answer turneth away wrath,' and if we are kind and gentle to Lyulph perhaps we may do him good."

"Oh, Amy, how can you always remember what is right. I read that verse this morning when you did, but *I* never thought of it now."

I had by this time descended from the bank, and was standing close by the children, for I could not bear to let slip so good an opportunity of becoming personally acquainted with this interesting child. I introduced myself "as the gentleman who lived in the low white house at the end of the church-lane at Westmaven," and expressing great sympathy with their recent disaster, I offered to carry the basket for them.

Amy looked a little surprised, but put the basket into my hand, and we walked on; I tried to converse with the child, and all her answers were marked by a gentle courtesy, and simple dignity that attracted me more and more.

We had not walked far before Rosie exclaimed, "There is my father!" and ran to meet a gentleman who was coming towards us. She seemed to tell him the history of our meeting, for she talked eagerly to him, and when he approached it was with a gracious smile and courteous bow; but he stopped a few paces before me, we gazed each on the other for awhile, and then the words "Ralph Bertrand!" burst from my lips, "Henry Everard," from his, and each recognized a friend of early youth long lost sight of. Circumstances had led us in opposite directions, and perhaps even had we been thrown much together we should have been in heart estranged, for I suspect there was nothing congenial in our natures. Certain I am that had not my interest in the little Amy dispelled for a time my misanthropy, I should have rather shunned than courted his

society. The young and happy ever amalgamate with others easily; everything, even to the sacred bonds of friendship, sits lightly on them; but age and misfortune render us more fastidious, and we become easily irritated by difference of habits and opinions.

Ralph Bertrand was an ordinary character; good-hearted, and generous, and what is called "a pleasant fellow" in his youth; and in advanced years an excellent man of business with a contented calculating spirit: an excellent estimable character in its way; but not one suited to sympathize with a disappointed, morbidly sensitive mind. So when he married and became engrossed by the occupation of providing handsomely for his family I saw less and less of him, and at last ceased even to know where he lived. I had never cared to inquire about the inhabitants of Westmaven or his name might have rung on my ear with a familiar sound; but even then he would not have had the interest in my eyes he now possessed, that I knew him to be the uncle and protector of the angelic little Amy.

As we walked home together we conversed chiefly on former days, (always a painful subject with me;) and when I led the subject to his niece's character, I saw he was incapable of appreciating the rare beauty of her disposition; he merely said she was an orphan, his sister's child, and that she was amiable and obedient.

Bertrand conducted me to his house, the two children having preceded us there, and leaving me in the drawing-room said he would fetch his wife who would be glad to see me.

Strange, nay foolish as it may appear, I care not to conceal that I felt a thrill of delight at being under the same roof as the little Amy.

In my eyes she was no ordinary child of earth, but a bright and spotless King's daughter; one who had kept unsullied the pledge of her inheritance; a bright being flitting across a thorny path, a mortal frame with an angel's soul, breathing holiness and purity around. My friend was some time absent, and I once more saw the little Amy, still unseen by her. A door opened out of the room where I was, into another and

smaller one, which to judge by the bats, balls, skipping-ropes, and story-books lying about, seemed appropriated to the children of the house. Here I saw Amy engaged in putting away different things in the room and arranging it in order. She had not been thus employed many minutes before the door was burst open and in walked Lyulph. I saw Amy colour timidly as he came in.

"Where's Ernest?" asked the boy.

"I don't know," said Amy, "Rosie!" and Rose came in from the garden. "Go and find Ernest and tell him Lyulph wants him." Rosie ran off to fulfil the errand. In the mean time Lyulph walked up and down the room muttering broken sentences to himself, of which I caught the words, "tyranny—cannot stand it, . . . too bad, . . ." &c., and others of the same sort, all expressing intense dissatisfaction at something. At last Amy who had quietly continued her occupations said gently, "Is anything the matter, Lyulph?"

"Anything! yes, a great deal. There am I sent off to school the very day we had fixed for our fishing excursion to Naresby."

"It is very provoking. But cannot you get leave to stay a day longer?"

"That is what I say; but my father will not hear of it."

"Oh, then of course you must submit," said Amy, firmly though gently.

"Of course! that is easy enough for you to say," retorted the turbulent boy, "but I tell you I cannot stand it. This is a thing we have planned so long; there are such lots of fellows going. I am come to see if Ernest can manage to have it a day sooner, but even if he can, it will not be half the fun for many reasons."

"I am very sorry for you," said Amy in a most sympathizing tone. There was a silence of some minutes, and then, as if he had suddenly recollected something, Lyulph exclaimed, "By the by, ... Oh! Are you sorry? I should have thought you would have been glad."

"Glad, Lyulph! glad that you are vexed and disappointed?" said Amy, in unfeigned surprise.

"Yes, to be sure; for now you are revenged on me for tormenting you this afternoon."

"Oh no, impossible," said Amy.

"Why, it's what nine people out of ten would be; and I declare it was a shame." Then after a moment's pause, he added in a graver tone between joke and earnest, "I suppose King's Daughters are never revengeful, eh?"

"We ought not to be," said Amy, looking up at him with a smile.

"And you don't even feel angry with me for knocking over your basket?"

"No, Lyulph, not now."

"I do think you are the best creature alive," continued the boy. "Now, tell me, Amy, you do not like to be laughed at for what you said the other day, do you?"

"I do not like such a subject to be laughed about," said Amy, "it is so very wrong jesting on sacred subjects."

"Well, I will not laugh at you any more," said Lyulph, in a tone of great magnanimity.

"Thank you very much," said Amy.

"The fact is," continued Lyulph, "I have known all along what you meant, only it was good fun quizzing you, and I could not help it. However, now I will keep Frank and

Cicely from teasing you, for I believe I generally lead them on to mischief."

Amy looked all gratitude. "Now Lyulph," she said, "I wish you would think about your being a King's Son."

"Oh don't begin talking of that," he said, with some of his former abruptness.

"But please think of it sometimes; it will make you better and happier; indeed it will," and in her earnestness she laid her tiny hand on his arms and looked up in his face. He felt the spell of her holiness, for he began his answer with a whistle, and "oh I'm very happy, thank you;" but it would not do, his countenance relaxed, and he finished with "I'll think about it then." Just then the window from the garden was thrown up, and Ernest and Rose came in. The door was shut, and the entrance of Bertrand with his wife put a stop to my reflections.

CHAPTER III.

FROM this day I became a constant visitor at the house of Amy's uncle, and by degrees I became intimate with the child herself, and with her noble cousin Ernest. She seemed to value my sympathy, and I may say became gratefully attached to me. This threw a gleam over my cold heartless existence. It was a lull in the storm of life.

One Sunday my friend's seat at Church was full, owing to his having some visitors staying with him, and the children were sent into a seat near mine, and next that occupied by Frank and his sister Marion. During the service I observed that Frank did all in his power to attract the notice of the young ones, and quite succeeded in making his own

sister and little Ralph Bertrand laugh incessantly. Amy never raised her eyes from her book but once, and that was to dart a glance of reproach at Rose, who for a moment forgot herself and smiled with the others. I was truly amazed at the firm resolution displayed by Amy, and her reverential behaviour in spite of the temptations round her. In vain Frank made absurd faces, and Marion jogged her elbow,—she succeeded in fixing, not only her own attention, but that of little Rose by her side.

I joined the children in their walk home. Ernest and Amy were walking together, at a slower pace than the others, and at some little distance behind them; for each day seemed to bring increase of weakness to little Amy, and make her less able to join in the active sports of those of her own age. I led the conversation to the behaviour of the children in church, and said "Do you never tell them how wrong and irreverent it is to laugh and play in the House of GOD?"

"Frank and Marion are older than I am," was her reply, and I was struck with the principle which prompted it.

Ernest here entreated her to lean on him, for the road was rough and uneven. I watched the strong athletic boy as he assisted his cousin over the rough places, and the fragile, spirit-like form of the child leaning on him, till I fell into a melancholy reverie on the probability of their speedy separation. For who could see her faltering step, hear her faint voice soft as summer breeze which came and went with the slightest exertion, and not feel how short must be her stay on this rude cold earth?

When we reached the garden gate, she quitted her hold of Ernest, and running on alone left us two together.

"She looks ill to-day," said Ernest, in a tone that seemed to ask for a contradiction of the remark.

"Very," I replied. "Fragile and tender as a summer flower, and like a flower will she fade."

"Fade! die!" said Ernest, with a bitter groan. "Oh no, not yet, it cannot be, and yet—she looks—oh fearfully ill."

"Indeed she does. Yes, the King's Daughter will return to her FATHER'S House. She will go; but who that has known her on

earth will forget her? She will leave behind footprints of her angel steps: but oh, how dull and comfortless will then appear the scenes which she once lightened with her presence."

Thus I mused scarcely remembering my companion, till a deep groan made me turn. Ernest was leaning his head on the gate groaning in anguish of spirit, for my words had pierced his very soul, and his whole countenance and attitude bore the impress of deep and bitter sorrow. I was deeply concerned to have been the cause of so much grief to the noble boy, and I murmured a few words of—I scarce knew what, but vaguely hoping they might be taken as a retraction of what I had just said. But it was in vain. Ernest raised his head and said in a broken voice, "No, you cannot unsay words once spoken, and how true I know too well. Oh Amy! Amy! when you are gone who will guide me? She has been my guiding star, the influence for good which has ruled me many a day. But she may live yet: why anticipate evils? they come fast enough, heaven *knows!*" At any other time I could have

smiled at these words from a young boy, in the flush of life and spirits, and as yet unwounded in the contest of life; but now his sorrow was too violent, too real to allow me to do so. Sorrow is contagious, and I felt the tears starting to my eyes; he saw it, and dashing away his own, pressed my hand, sprung over the wicket, and was gone in an instant.



CHAPTER IV.

WINTER came. Amy was first confined to the house, and then to the sofa. She was fast sinking; I often sat with her, and how many sweet peaceful hours did I spend conversing with her! If human love can bless, Amy was indeed favoured; now in her illness it was seen how many loved her. Young and old, rich and poor, all prized and valued her. The villagers inquired frequently for her, and her young companions were unremitting in their attentions to her.

Frank and Lyulph would steal softly into her room, and leave flowers or books for her, and Marion and Cicely no longer sneered and talked lightly in her presence, but were gentle and thoughtful. It was touching to

see rude boys and giddy girls checking their wild mirth and restraining their boisterous natures, for fear of jarring the gentle spirit in its progress from earth to heaven.

Ernest and Rose scarcely ever left her; they were almost always to be found by her couch, reading to her or talking to her. Often have I sat watching the beaming of Amy's eyes, as she listened to some tale of Ernest's imagining, as it flowed from his lips in the tones of his rich mellow voice. And so the winter passed away, and the spring came, the bright, beautiful, and yet half-sad season of spring. Amy's couch was moved to the window whence she could gaze on the reviving verdure.

One unusually bright afternoon in April, I was walking in the village debating whether I should go and see the little Amy. I had been the day before, and though I always met with a warm welcome, I felt some scruples about going so frequently, when I met Lyulph's sister Cicely. I saw directly that something sorrowful had occurred, for her countenance wore none of the bold carelessness which was its usual unpleasant

characteristic, and tears seemed standing in her eyes.

"You come from the Bertrands," I said. "Tell me how you left the dear child."

"Very, very ill," she replied. "If you can—oh do go there, for her aunt and uncle have been called from home on business. They thought her better, but—she is *not*. Do go." And Cicely hurried past me, evidently much overcome. This was enough, I went. As I entered the drawing room Rosie, who was sitting by the sofa, raised her finger in token of silence. Amy was asleep. Ernest was seated in the window; he started as I entered, and as he looked up I saw traces of tears on his face. In reply to my whispered inquiry after his cousin, he replied "Worse, oh much worse," and turned aside with a deep groan. A silence ensued. I again whispered, "Shall I go?" He seized my hand convulsively and said in a hollow voice, "Oh stay, my father and mother are away; they have been sent for, but the hour we have dreaded is very near at hand."

I stayed therefore. An hour of silence slipped away; the only sounds which broke

the stillness were the ticking of the clock, and the short painful breathing of the sleeping child.

There she lay; her white hands crossed on her breast; her golden hair hanging round her lovely face, and one cheek flushed as red as crimson. Once she moved; the blood rushed to Ernest's face, but she slept on, and he became pale and motionless as before. I saw by the heaving of his chest that his breath came and went with difficulty, from the violence of his efforts to check the rising sobs.

At length he turned to me, and with a smile, ghastly in its expression of suppressed misery, he pointed to the setting sun, and looking towards the sleeping child murmured "It is her last sleep on earth." At that moment Amy opened her eyes, and Ernest was at her side. For a moment Amy did not speak; she seemed to gasp for breath, her fingers were trying to undo a golden chain round her neck; Rosie did the office for her. To the chain a small gold cross was attached. She put it into Ernest's hand and whispered, "Keep it, dear Ernest, for my sake; wear it and think of me sometimes;

I am dying, but we shall meet again; kiss me, darling Rosie, once more." Little Rosie jumped up, and throwing her arms round her neck, sobbed violently. I came forward, and disengaging her led her to the window, where the poor little child laid her head on my shoulder trembling and weeping. Amy caught sight of me and murmured some inarticulate words.

"Amy, best loved," cried Ernest, in a choking voice, "Are you going to leave me for ever?"

"Not for ever, oh no; I am going home, and you will come soon, dear, dear Ernest. Now will you raise me up that I may look once more at the setting sun?" Ernest raised her head on his arm. For an instant she closed her eyes, I thought that she was gone, but they opened again. "Tell my uncle," she said, "I love him very much, and thank him for loving me. Good-bye, dear Rosie; good-bye, Mr. Everard; dearest Ernest, I love you best on earth," and then a placid smile passed across her face. Her eyes for a moment resumed their brilliancy; a flood of glory broke from the western heavens.

"The gates of my FATHER'S palace are

thrown open," said Amy. "I see the glory through them. Ernest, life is short, we shall meet again in heaven. In my FATHER'S House are many mansions!" Her head fell on Ernest's shoulder, her spirit had fled. Some moments elapsed ere I believed it was so. A smile still rested on her lovely features, the beams of the setting sun played on her face. Ernest's dark hair mingled with her golden tresses; his head sank lower and lower, the sun vanished behind a cloud, and before I could reach the spot, Ernest had fallen insensible on the ground.

CHAPTER V.

WEEKS passed on; weeks of misery yet not without inward consolation, of cheerlessness yet not without thoughts of hope. I was about to leave Westmaven; circumstances called me away, and I did not wish to combat a fate that took me from a spot which had lost its charm for me, and where every object led my thoughts to dwell sadly on the past. Once more my life was bereft of anything to cheer it. I was once a light-hearted, bold youth full of promise, and my friends exulted in me as I was then, and dwelt on my future career with proud anticipation. Where were these hopes and these promises? Crushed! fled like a morning dream! Instead of a hero, I became a misanthrope! Yes, my

early hopes were blighted. She whom I had loved,—who said she returned my affection, —she who had promised to share life with me, its sorrows and its joys, she had married another,—and that other was—the friend of my heart. He who had shared my every thought and feeling, robbed me of my soul's treasure. Treacherously and insidiously he supplanted me. I was long ere I forgave him, but I did forgive him; but she whom I believed more than human, had proved weak and faithless, the friend whom I trusted, reverenced, false and treacherous, and the shock was too much for a sensitive mind. I felt I could never trust a human being more. I shared the follies, the faults of my fellow creatures, I thought to drown thought in a whirl of false pleasure, but not one feeling have I imparted to any, and he exists not, who could say he was the recipient of a confidence, however trifling.

No! the tree exposed to constant tempests may bend before them, and though branches may be rent away, limbs broken, it will retain its inward vigour, and year by year put forth fresh foliage; but the tree struck by

lightning is seared and withered for ever; the shock is as sudden as fatal, and so long as it stands to cumber the ground it is unsightly, unfruitful, and useless.

Enough of this! Once more had my better feelings been roused and again blasted. Yet not altogether blasted! I go forth again into the world, and it shall be for active good. The blasted tree has put forth one young shoot, and it shall, though weakened and fragile, be cherished while it lives, and all the remaining vigour of the main stem to cherish it.

Before leaving Westmaven, I went to bid farewell to Bertrand and his family. I asked for Ernest, but he was out. The last words were spoken to my friend; Rosie put a bunch of forget-me-nots into my hand, and I turned my back on the earthly home of the little Amy, perhaps for ever.

Sad were my thoughts as I slowly traced my steps towards the churchyard, which held all that remained on earth of that holy child.

They were sad, but passionless. Mine was this time a sorrow, which seemed to come direct from heaven, not through the medium of human declension: a sorrow,

intense but free from remorse and wholly unworldly. My heart was chastened now, not bruised and seared as before, and I prayed in my soul it might leave me a better man.

I picked my way through the long rank grass of the churchyard, till I reached the grave of the blessed child. It was a flat stone with a cross at the head, and engraven on it her name, age, and this verse,

> "Out of the mouth of very babes and sucklings
> Hast Thou ordained strength."

I did not look up till I was close upon the spot, and there first saw a living figure. It was Ernest, kneeling over the grave; the little cross, Amy's last gift, clasped in his hand; his long dark hair hanging in profusion over his face, tears streaming from his eyes, and his lips moving in prayer.

Poor boy! he was weeping bitterly, and praying fervently.

When he saw me he rose and clasped my hand, and "Ernest," I said, "I leave this place to-morrow."

"So soon, and when to return?"

"Perhaps never."

"Never? but we shall meet again."

"We may meet in the Battle of Life. Tell me what is to be your post."

"I am going into Holy Orders," answered Ernest, "and you—?"

"My home is the world, and my office such as circumstances may point out. But whenever, wherever, we meet, shall we not always be friends?"

"Always!" said Ernest, and we both gazed on the grave. Just then the sun was sinking behind the trees. Ernest pointed to it. "It was at this hour, on such an evening as this, she died. Is not her spirit now with us?" and he sank on his knees. I knelt by him while he murmured, "In all time of our tribulation, in all time of our wealth, in the hour of death, and in the day of judgment, Good LORD, deliver us, and make us even like her."

CHAPTER VI.

YEARS have elapsed, and how changed again is my position in life! Youth is passed, middle age nearly gone, and old age is near at hand. Solitary old age. Men still call me unsociable—perhaps I am; still I am happy, for my life is a useful one.

It is now a few months ago, that I was walking in the cathedral town in which for the time I was dwelling; I was unoccupied, and as I walked near the great cathedral, I saw crowds of people pressing in, and I seemed bound by a spell to join them. There was a great ordination; I obtained a seat near the altar, and my whole soul was riveted by the beautiful service.

Suddenly I started, for in the voice of one

of the candidates, as he replied in the form prescribed to the solemn appeal of the prelate, I recognized a tone familiar to me. That tone bore me back many years. I strained my eyes to distinguish to whom it belonged, and in the raven locks, dark thoughtful eyes, and pallid face, of a tall manly youth near me, I recognized Ernest. The next day and the next, I spent in a vain search after him; at last I bethought me of going to seek him at the evening cathedral service, and there I found him. After we met, I spent that evening with him, and learnt the history of the years of his life we had been separated. His father and mother are both dead, leaving him a large fortune, most of which he has spent in building and endowing a beautiful church, (in a neglected part of the country about twenty miles from Westmaven) of which he has just been ordained rector.

And here I purpose to end my days. I have a small house not far from the rectory, and by working under Ernest as a kind of lay curate, I may by humility and activity atone for half a life of folly and pride. Rosie, now an estimable young woman, lives with her

brother, as does Ralph also. Not far from my dwelling rises the church "of the Holy Innocents," and there as morning breaks and evening falls, can I worship the great King.

As we entered the holy temple the first time, Ernest pointed to us a scroll on the wall near the entrance, on which were the words, "The King's Daughter is all glorious within," saying as he did so, "while it applies to the Holy Church, it may always remind us of one we have loved and lost, but whom GOD grant we may one day follow."

Yes, Ernest has fulfilled all the hope of his boyhood; he is a faithful soldier and servant of his great King and Master. His talents and energies, the powers of his mind and his earthly hopes, are all centred on one object, and still he looks back to his childhood as the time when he first learned his great privileges and high duties from the bright example and holy influence of her who truly realized that she was THE KING'S DAUGHTER.

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